

Letter from Julien A. Ripley to Alexander Graham Bell, August 30, 1909, with transcript

COPY Aug. 30th , 1909 Dear Mr. Bell

Well the week is over and we are back in Deauville again waiting to take the steamer home for America.

You wrote that you would like to hear a few impressions of the Aviation week at Rheims and I will try to condense a few ideas I got. You will undoubtedly have followed the results in the paper so I shall not go into any descriptions.

1st. It is evident the serious effect that the slightest breeze has on all the aeroplanes. When Curtiss flew for the cup there was no apparent stirring of the air and the instruments measured it as under 3 meters a second. Yet Curtiss said that when he got going the air seemed boiling and he was nearly thrown from his seat. We went in to see him and had a pleasant chat with him and he wanted us to remember him to you. His machine compares well with the others, very much more compact than the other biplanes and his motor worked very regularly and gave him practically no trouble. He never was forced to come to the ground against his will, which no one of the others could say.

The monoplanes of course had the popular favor. It is absolutely impossible to convey in words the graceful beauty of their flights especially the one driven by Latham who soared aloft with his Antoinette monoplane with all the poise and balancing motion of a great eagle.

It is a fact to be noted that the best records were held by men who flew their own machines which they had designed and built. Curtiss, in the cup race, and speed race, both of which he won and came in second in the ten kilometres race. Bleriot on his own

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machine won the ten kilometres and would have won the 30 kil. but for the accidental destruction of his aeroplane. Farnam won the distance race, covering 180 kil. on his own aeroplane, also the passenger race taking two passengers.

The Wright machines did not do so well as I had expected, but I imagine if either of the brothers had been on board the result might have been different. As it was they did not seem as steady as some of the French biplanes notably those of the box-kite construction.

As to motors, there was one called the Gnome, of French construction which Farnam used that seemed to do especially well. It has seven cylinders, I think, which revolve around a common center, lubricated by force pump and the movement helps to keep them cool.

We met Sir Hiram Maxim who also wished me to remember him to you. He claims to have a motor far lighter than any that have been used here and perhaps has in mind to go in again for aeroplanes. He thinks that this meeting will do more to stimulate aviation than anything that has yet been done as it will be realized now that flying is an accomplished act. I am most interested in what you say about your "Oinos" and hope to have you tell me about it when we get back.

With kind regards and love to all from us both. Very Sincerely Yours, /s/ Julien A. Ripley